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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 002842

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PAYS GOODBYE CALL TO OPPOSITION LEADER
SHEIKH HASINA

Classified By: P/E Counselor D.C. McCullough, Reason(s): 1.4 (b)

1. (C) On June 16, Ambassador paid a final call to opposition leader Sheikh Hasina. Also present were MP Alhaj Syed Abul Hossain, Abdul Jalil, Awami League Secretary General, and poloff (notetaker). Hasina had three concerns: attacks on the Awami League (AL), the need for free and fair elections and her health.

2. (SBU) Hasina commented on the morning papers report that the BNP government arrested three suspects for the August 21, 2004 explosion by saying that these three people were not responsible and the arrest was a setup by the government. With the State Minister for Home Affairs in charge of the investigation, she had no confidence in an unbiased investigation. She repeated her charge that the BNP government is trying to systematically "destroy" the AL and asked what the US is doing to ensure justice. The Ambassador explained that we are working quietly with the government in the Kibria investigation but are not involved in the August 21 case.

3. (C) In response to the question whether she was going to forge a partnership with the Islamic extremist group IOJ, she sidestepped, citing the current BNP led four-party coalition as a marriage of convenience where "they" will do anything "to get more votes." In response to the question whether the AL was going to boycott the election, she noted that the AL victory in the Chittagong mayoral race proved that, with free and fair elections, the AL will "come back to win."

4. (C) She plans to travel abroad to the UK for a parliamentary event, and to Moscow at the invitation of the Russian government, but expects to return by June 30. She complained of hearing loss from the explosion of August 21, saying that her inner ear bones were broken. She purchased a hearing aid that is available regionally, but it only increases the volume and does not permit her to hear clearly. Consequently, she plans to travel to the US in July to purchase a suitable hearing aid.
THOMAS